

RIGHTS, RESISTANCE AND REPROACH: MAHA, THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS, IN FAQIR'S *PILLARS OF SALT*

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ABSTRACT

The Arab world and its literature is a collection of literal expressions of revolutionary and reformatory ideals, aimed at justice, equality and liberty claimed by a group of countries under one canopy called the Arab world. The common themes of the Arab writers were struggles related to migration, economic, political and social suppression due to Colonialism and female subjugation ingrained in their cultural practices and religious interpretations. With the radical changes in the social and political structures as the outcome of cross-cultural interaction and globalization, the present generation of Arab women writers has taken the pen as a weapon for self-defense against ignominy and as a tool to claim their existential rights. Fadia Faqir is one such Arab writer who strives to pull off the mask painted on the Arab faces only to reveal their true potential to the rest of the world. She is a blend of the East and West and writes in English. Her second novel, *Pillars of Salt*, is a story of two women Maha and Umm Saad who live a life of unending struggle and loss. The sense of loss that closes the novel bespeaks the ongoing fights which fill the lives of many Arab women even today. Fadia Faqir constructs an indefatigable Arab woman in Maha as against the popular stereotyped, submissive, vulnerable image. Maha finds fulfillment of her wishes and succeeds in demonstrating her will against colonial and patriarchal advances. She becomes the voice of the voiceless, who are silenced by oppressive forces and almost non-existent to the patriarchal eyes.

KEYWORDS: Arab Women Writers, Fadia Faqir, *Pillars of Salt*, Feminist Consciousness, Colonial and Patriarchal Hegemony

INTRODUCTION

After centuries of silence and suppression, the writings from the Arab societies have gained prominence in the early 20th century. The major chunk of literary contribution has come from Lebanon and Egypt, although a few significant contributions have been from Syria, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan and the Gulf. The prominent women forerunners of Arab literature across the Arab countries are Malak Hifnī Nāṣif, Nazīrah Zayn al-Dīn, Hudā Sha'rāwī, Labībah Ahmad, Maryānā Marrāsh, Sukaynah bint al-Husayn, Mayy Ziyādah, Wardah al- Yāzījī, 'Ā'ishah Taymūr, Zaynab Fawwāz, 'Afīfah Karam and Alice al-Bustānī. Many of their works remain readable only in their original language. Nevertheless, a sizeable number of influential works have been translated and made available to readers worldwide. The Arab world and its literature is a collection of literal expressions of revolutionary and reformatory ideals, aimed at justice, equality and liberty claimed by a group of countries under one canopy called the Arab world. The common themes of these writers were struggles related to migration, economic, political and social suppression due to Colonialism and female subjugation ingrained in their cultural practices and religious interpretations. Arab renaissance had generated significant output by female writers in terms of quality, although not in numbers. Due to geopolitical differences, the output after the First World

War had declined. The sparse literature available during the period was about identity conflicts - (internal) national identity and (external) larger Arab identity, border issues, and resistance against oppression, primarily written by men. Women were active in social and national work. The re-emergence of literature after a hiatus of nearly five decades was replete with many publications and significant literary production high with reformed ideas and contemporary themes. Traces of women's writing are found in the early 19th century. However, translation movement, spread of education and role of printing press had an important effect on early modern writings which focused on women's issues such as right to education, right to choose work of her choice against the stereotypical roles assigned by the society, appearance in the public and the extent of domestic responsibilities borne by her. Male reformers like al-Tahtawi, Qasim Amin belonged to both Islamist and liberal schools of thought and hence had accepted modernisation brought in by the West. They aimed at raising the standards of Arab women to the level of European women who enjoyed a special status in the society. This change in the outlook towards women in the Arab society heralded the modern era characterised by conflicts between tradition and modernity. The image of a woman was seen as a bridge between the approaching Western lifestyle and the ancient system of beliefs and customs rooted in Arab culture. Therefore, the women pioneers were aware of the need for self expression by women which tended to be different than men. Elsadda quotes Labiba Hashim thus:

Men write about women the way they know and think; women write about themselves the way they believe and feel. [Women] are more cognizant of the condition of women, their weak points and how to win over generations of women and take them to what is best for the country and of benefit to themselves (102)

Hence, the early feminist writings from the Arab world bore resemblance and influence of the Western waves of Feminism. While the early reformers considered the positive influence of the West towards the development of the country, the rise of nationalism in 1914 gave birth to a new set of ideologies that questioned the genuineness and worthiness of the West's interests. The writers of this generation focused on the conflicts prevailing over the acceptance and rejection of the Western norms and practices, the mismatch between the two civilizations, the cultural divide that was leading to loss of identity. They strived to sustain the inherent patriotism by carving an individual self that grew in tandem with the national freedom struggle. Hoda Elsadda (2008) takes the example of Egyptian identity and says that attempts to define its features "led to an interest in particular topics, such as the perpetual comparisons between the Egyptian and the Westerner, and writings about the countryside and peasants, the relationship between the intellectual and society, the role of women in modern society, and male-female relationships"(110). The protagonists in the novels had an intimate resemblance to the authors themselves and thus the literature bears a unique touch of reality and relevance to the times. Women gained entry to the Universities in 1909 and this aided in the widespread exposure to those women thirsty of knowledge and education. Biographies and autobiographies were written by many writers which provided a deep insight into the inner predicaments faced by women. They served as influential documents to stimulate the latent talents in the women of the times. The period 1940s – 1950s is marked by several political events, and writers were vested with the responsibility of giving voice to national issues. The period after the Second World War gave way to mature works that were shaped by the changes that occurred world over. The significant literary output of the female writers of this time was that they found this the ideal time to rebel against the existing cultural system continuing to exist in them. They played within the binary social constructs demanding limited freedom of movement and expression and simultaneously accepting some basic assumptions. The works on these themes had an impact on the reading public thereby paving avenues for the women to exercise freedom and challenge the restrictive framework within the family and in the society at large.

The experimental works of the early women writers underpin the quality of the younger writings, which enjoy the added advantage of an easier international access. Amina Said, a Tunisian writer and activist questions the role of young Arab women in the growth of Arab literature. In one of her provocative essays, Said(1990), "Feast of Unveiling" written in 1973, she urges the younger generation to evaluate their contribution to the advancement of feminist liberation movement post 20th century. Said writes that the biggest challenge of these writers is to erase the Western image of an Arab woman as "a backward woman living behind the walls of the harem, ignorant, veiled, and crippled in effort and movement, totally incapable of performing any role in the service of her country" (359). Trapped in a detrimental environment, these writers also need to think what it means "to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are both overtly and covertly patriarchal" (Gilbert 1979: 46). Gilbert and Gubar trace the shadow of the literary heritage begot by the successive writers of a time period to the concept of psychology of literary history which includes "the tensions and anxieties, hostilities and inadequacies writers feel when they confront not only the achievements of their predecessors but the traditions of genre, style and metaphor that they inherit from such forefathers" (46). With the radical changes in the social and political structures as the outcome of cross-cultural interaction and globalization, the present generation of Arab women writers have taken the pen as a weapon for self-defense against ignominy and as a tool to claim their existential rights. The best way to assert uniqueness is in the way these writers explore and project the conditions – both mental and physical – of native and immigrant Arab women trying to confront multiple factors like migrational trauma, gender and racial oppression, political disturbances, patriarchal domination, honour killings and indigenous cultural practices, alongside a passion to sever all links to baseless beliefs and climb up the ladder of professional success.

Fadia Faqir is one such Arab writer who strives to pull off the mask painted on the Arab faces only to reveal their true potential to the rest of the world. She is a product of Arab Bedouin legacy encountering the West. As a contemporary Anglo-Arab writer of the 21st century, Faqir proves wrong the assertions of Amina Said that the modern Arab woman chooses to stand still in spite of the wide horizons of opportunities and "advancement of social thinking and the development of life outside our area" (361). Born in Amman, Jordan, in 1956, Faqir worked as a journalist before coming to the UK to complete an MA and PhD. Her first novel, *Nisanit* (1988), focuses on the first Palestinian intifada. *Pillars of Salt* (1996), a novel that uses the medium of traditional Bedouin folklore to convey the pathetic stories of two women, Maha and Umm Saad, who barely survive the might of patriarchy and colonialism in spite of fighting till the end, established her as a writer centrally concerned with the Anglo-Arab encounter. *My Name is Salma* (2007), published in the US as *The Cry of the Dove*, features a young woman persecuted in the name of honour in an unnamed Levantine country and forced into exile in Britain. Faqir recently completed her fourth novel, *At the Midnight Kitchen*. Additionally, she has produced incisive scholarship on intra-family femicide and on women's rights and democracy in Arab and Islamic contexts. She was the general editor of the *Arab Women Writers* series, featuring *In the House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers* (1998) and translated novels by Hoda Barakat, Hamida Naana, Salwa Bakr, Liana Badr and Alia Mamdouh. Faqir is currently a Writing Fellow at Saint Aidan's College, Durham University, UK. This paper attempts a feminist reading of *Pillars of Salt* by viewing Maha as a powerful protagonist.

Fadia Faqir a feminist writer supports the cause of Arab women who are still clutched in the grips of abuse, injustice and patriarchal domination. Having travelled and settled in the West, she is a perfect product of the East-West encounter at the political and social levels, which she ventilates through her works. Edward Said tracks two principal relations between East and West that are visible in the writings of such writers:

One was a growing, systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual ... [through] a sizeable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength But the essential relationship, on political, cultural, and even religious grounds, was seen – in the West to be between a strong and a weak partner. (40)

As a solution to this conflict, Faqir develops a strategy to empower her women who rise to challenge suppression to prove their rights. *Pillars of Salt* is a story of two women Maha and Umm Saad who live a life of unending struggle and loss. The sense of loss that closes the novel bespeaks the ongoing fights which fill the lives of many Arab women even today.

Fadia Faqir constructs an indefatigable Arab woman in Maha as against the popular stereotyped, submissive, vulnerable image. Maha finds fulfillment of her wishes and succeeds in demonstrating her will against colonial and patriarchal advances. Sheikh Nimer had married Maliha, who had died early leaving behind a daughter, Maha and a son, Daffash. The Sheikh grieved the death of Maliha, but Maha tried to compensate the sense of loss. She was a responsible daughter, who helped her father in the field, shared his burden at home and took good care of the animals in the farm. She grew up with a defiant attitude and that is why she often questions Daffash who never showed any interest in the family. Daffash was an indifferent, selfish man, who ran after luxury and easy money. He had taken to the company of the Whites and had betrayed his own people. Maha dared to attack him on several occasions and thereby the author projects her as a warrior against crime and immorality.

Another important character is the storyteller, Sami al-Adjnabi. In an interview to Lindsey Moore, Faqir explains the role of the story teller thus:

He is a foreigner familiar with Arab ways. The women's stories are at the heart of *Pillars*: the lower voice, the simpler voice, is supposed to challenge his bombastic voice that perpetuates myths, illusions and lies. The narrative of the storyteller dramatizes how Orientalists fabricated our history in their romantic yet vacuous narratives. It's like that Orientalist painting—Gérôme's *The Guard of the Harem* [1859]—with a black guard and with a padlocked door behind him. That for me crystallizes how much Orientalists wanted to get in, but they were never allowed, so they imagined what lay behind that guarded door. Their narratives were a shabby representation of the complex reality of the Arab world. Similarly, the storyteller in *Pillars* is confined to the outskirts, the margins. [In] *Pillars*, the two narratives overlap only once. Sami al-Adjnabi is not allowed access to the indigenous culture and Maha doesn't know that he exists: he's mentioned only once in her narrative as —that liar. (7)

The storyteller's version subverts the honourable character of Maha to a ghoul, a demon, a fiend and a witch who devoured the good spirits of Hamia and bewitched the young men by invoking the evil spirits. He associates her abilities to supernatural powers and exorcism. Faqir relates his version to the exotic element attached to the Bedouin culture that believed in witchcraft and spirits. The Occidents had a special attraction to this unknown side of this culture. The storyteller is a perfect example of an Occidental male chauvinist who can never accept a Bedouin Arab woman emerging mightier and influential than him.

There is a significant connection between the storyteller's version of Maha's life and the reality thought out through Maha's reminiscences in the al-Fuhais prison. Maha is introduced to the readers as "A charming woman who challenged and surrendered She was a sharp sword stuck in the sides of the Arab's enemies: the Tartars, the Crusaders and the Roman Maha's soul was a lamp kindled from the glowing oil of an olive tree, that was neither of the east nor of the west" (Faqir 2004: 2-3). One sees her as an exotic figure brimming with an unusual sense of resistance against native and foreign authority. The storyteller is of Western origin having a fair knowledge of the East. So, from his perspective Maha stands out as a brave girl who is believed to "set the blood-feud between men and women. Her cry echo[ed] in female hearts calling for revenge" (Faqir 2004: 3). However, it turns out true, when towards the end, Maha along with the other women of the tribe, stands against the marriage proposal with Sheikh Talib, an old man with wicked, greedy eyes who belonged to the tribe.

In the version of the story which runs parallel to the storyteller's, Maha seems a chaste woman, who, unlike the other foolish women "who risked honour for love" (Faqir 2004: 10), restrained from heeding to Harb's call to meet at night. She was prepared to lose Harb's love but felt proud of her own lineage – her courageous grandmother Sabha and her daring mother Maliha. When her shepherdess friend, Nasra, is wronged by Daffash, Maha pulls out the English rifle and thinks not a moment before digging at the ribs of her sleeping brother. She blazes like hot fire at the stealthy crime done by her brother. She sympathized with the naïve women of the tribe who blindly followed the luring men to the mountains at night and finally lost their virginity and honour. These women were shot between the eyes by their own men for committing honour crime and the man was never called guilty. Maha's furious words, "I would kill that mule and save the women of Hamia" (Faqir 11), display her sense of responsibility and anguish towards the culprit, Daffash. Even Sheikh Nimer had proudly declared, "the daughter of the tiger of the desert must be a tigress" (Faqir 2004: 11).

The author begins by elevating Maha as a fearless patriot and subduing Daffash as a shameless traitor. Maha's strong attachment to the soil is seen in her love for the oranges, lemons and henna that she grew with care. Faqir often mentions Maha's love for the soil, which hits a strong patriotic note and a means of securing her identity with the soil. Maha longed to be with Harb, the twin of her soul. But Harb, a tribesman fighter was mostly away fighting the British. Harb never understood the heroism that welled within Maha. Maha is seen grieving over her inability to accompany Harb on the battleground. She feels that her support is important, but it is the society that stops her from venturing out into the woods to fight against the intruders. The author hits at the stereotypical roles that bind women from following their wishes. Maha expresses her disgust against the Whites and insists on Arab sovereignty by saying, "We are free Bedouins. We never accepted foreign masters" (Faqir 2004: 83). Maha seeks the help of Hulala who was known to treat barrenness. Maha endures the severe pain of her cauterized belly in order to prove her fertility and possible motherhood. She loses Harb in a battle with the Whites, but her broken heart is soothed by the realization of her pregnancy. Maha, being a nationalist, loved the same spirit that filled Harb's every breath. Thus Maha imagines feed her son with his father's heroic stories. Maha waits to avenge the death of her husband by disrespecting the White visitors in Pasha's house. The episode that proves her acute hostility towards the colonizers is the one where she is duped to cook exotic Arab food for the unknown guests at the Pasha's residence. Since Pasha's medicines had cured her diseased oranges and lemons, she agrees to take up the work. But the moment she realizes that she was cooking for the English, who had killed Harb, she doesn't hesitate to shout abuses in the middle of the gathering. Unmindful of her surroundings, she bursts out in anger and calls them "foreign killers" (Faqir 2004: 162). Maha falls a prey to Daffash's subterfuge, "the art of which", Edward Said (1979) quotes Glidden, "was highly developed in Arab life, as well as in Islam itself; the Arab need for vengeance overrides

everything, otherwise the Arab would feel ‘ego-destroying’ shame” (49). Faqir has used this right moment to showcase the loyalty and strength of an Arab woman, who was turning to ashes in the memory of Harb, a progressive husband and a nationalist. Amina Said (1990) remarks, “nationalism cannot be worthy of mention nor respect if it does not exist in the form of courageous, constructive acts based on belief in values and morals. It is important that every good woman citizen should perform these acts if she feels it her duty to serve her country so that the Arabs would regain their former dignity” (361).

Daffash is seen as the symbol of patriarchal authority, fused with a meek submission to the colonial powers. So, Daffash would be the first enemy for a brave woman like Maha. She frequently feels a strong urge to kill him. “I must fight Daffash... I should have killed him in the cave as he mounted Salih’s wife. I should have pulled the trigger and shot him in the heart. I should have killed him before Nasra’s tunes had lost their warmth” (Faqir 2004: 215). After the death of their father, Daffash tries to seize the land that Sheikh Nimer had written off to Maha, who had toiled hard to maintain it. He challenges her of her ownership with the claim that he, being the son was the direct inheritor of the property. He also decides to marry her off to an old Sheikh of the village as a second wife. Maha resists both the demands in a violent manner. She connives with Tamam and Hulala and escapes into the mountains leaving her son, Mubarak, with her mother-in-law. In a couple of days, she hears about the destruction of her garden and farm by Daffash and firms up to return to her village risking her life. Maha’s words are like sharp beams of arrows that spilt the shield of male authority into pieces. His ego crumbles at her feet when she defiantly declares, “First, I don’t talk to rapists...Second, I don’t talk to disobedient sons. Third, I don’t talk to servants of the English... I will get married to nobody. I will not sign any deeds, and will never cook for the English” (Faqir 2004: 217).

Faqir’s novels possess the strain of gendered resistance with the leftist voice of reformation at the centre, perpetuating the male anger in a complex structure of male-female discourse. In *Pillars of Salt*, the continuing struggle against colonial occupation is coupled with the gendered resistance exhibited by the two woman protagonists. “Gendered resistance in general [has] the potential of motivating others to advocate for themselves and others. It is this potential to motivate that is a characteristic of women’s opposition to oppression and that crosses cultural, geographic and historical domains,” says Walters in an interview (“Question and Answer with the editors of *Gendered Resistance*.” 5 Mar 2014). This idea is evident in *Pillars of Salt* when Maha succeeds to elicit support from most of the women of Qasim tribe who unanimously voice against the men and extend words of encouragement like, “You are the ploughwoman of this land. You must fight. We will support you” (Faqir 2004: 201). The women of the Qasim tribe endorse a collective identity when they rise against the dominant men. However, the physical power gets better of their biological fragility. Faqir makes Maha an exemplary voice of opposition against male hegemony and European rule, that her ultimate failure weighs lesser than her progressive strife. She identifies all the young women as “the daughters of today” (Faqir 2004: 191) who are capable of living their life at their will. It can be assumed that Faqir would have intended to transfer the modern edge of critical networking among the Muslim women world-wide to the waning colonial period in Jordan where the first seeds of mutual support, collective uprisals could have been sown.

Faqir, a resolute, secular radical feminist, has developed a unique feminist consciousness in *Pillars of Salt* – one that is unbound by culture where “a woman or group of women might remain positively focused on constructing new systems without ever having said no to the old. This definition of feminism describes changing states of consciousness, each reflecting women’s understanding of themselves and their situations as related to their social and biological

condition" (Cooke 2001).

Faqir sketches Maha with a different shade to prove her extraordinary spirit. Several instances in the novel show how she despised the Whites and the native slaves to the "cursed English". Maha leaps beyond her gender limitations to become an ideal path breaker in the domains of Bedouin womanhood. Maha lives by self-will – an assertion of her meaningful existence – be it her choice to plant oranges and lemons, to weave the carpet whenever she desired, to marry Harb and reject a second marriage by planning to run away to the mountains. Even her decision to go back to the village is very crucial in structuring her character.

However, the climax turns out tragic for Maha, as her reaction to Daffash and the other head men of the tribe is violent. The arrival of white-clad men who handcuff Maha and take her away to the mad house at Fuhais is so sudden that the readers are made to understand that the men had neither ability nor wisdom to agree to the just demands of a woman, but could only use their physical force to silence her. Even at this juncture, Maha is powerful enough not to leave a stone unturned to prove her rights, but the underlying patriarchal structure surfaces as the only resort to the men. It is relevant to quote Patricia Klindienst who calls for a feminist poetics in the story of Philomela's emergence after silence. She observes that "behind the woman's silence is the incomplete plot of male dominance, which fails no matter how extreme it becomes. Dominance can only contain, but never successfully destroy, the woman's voice" (qtd. in Suyoufie & Hammad 2009: 292).

As Geoffrey Nash (2007) opines, "Faqir's position in *Pillars of Salt* represents a feminist riposte to both colonizer and the patriarchal national society" (120). Nash also refers to Kandiyoti who writes that during the nationalistic battles, women were also seen as "the symbol of nation's new found vigour and modernity or the privileged repository of uncontaminated national values" (qtd. in Nash: 121). Thus Maha deserves to be claimed as a strong patriot fighting against the Colonisers and a human rights activist protesting and raging against patriarchal hegemony and rights of women.

When asked to comment on the ending of the novel, in the interview to Lindsey Moore (2011), Faqir revealed that a happy ending would not have been possible and realistic as "the subordination of Arab women is an ongoing problem" (8). Faqir posits the continued struggle of women that has not found a suitable solution even in the present. There is an implicit patriarchal complicity in all spheres of decision-making and administration. Wehr Demaris speaks of Ann Ulanov, a Jungian analyst, who intensifies Jung's argument that "the feelings and the attitudes that are motivated by unconscious sometimes come out like 'rage'. As a result, rage would work like a weapon to achieve a social change" (qtd. in Qaisi 2011: 8). This stimulated rage in Maha has been read as 'madness' by the dominant male sex, who send her to the madhouse. While men like Harb fought the English, Maha fought for her rights – right to inheritance (her father had given a share of the land in his will), right to live alone after Harb's death and right to raise her son in the shadow of Harb's spirits. Faqir seems to follow the dictum of one of the earliest radical feminists Huda Sharaawi (1990), who spoke on pan-Arab feminist ideology during the Arab Feminist Conference in 1944. She said, "Every woman who does not stand up for her legitimate rights would be considered as not standing up for the rights of her country and the future of her children and society. Even man who is pushed by his selfishness to trespass on the legitimate rights of women is robbing the rights of others and bringing harm to the country" (340). Daffash, in the novel, is the pro-British native who, Sharaawi blames for harming the country and Maha is the woman who fights against all odds to claim her rights.

Fadia Faqir can be compared to Jane Austen on the lines of Gilbert and Gubar (1979) who analysed the latter's talent to critically capture her culture. They write, "By exploiting the very conventions she exposes as inadequate, she demonstrates the power of patriarchy as well as the ambivalence and confinement of the female writer. She also discovers

an effective subterfuge for a severe critique of her culture” (166). By showcasing customs like honour killing, the open declaration of the bride’s virginity on the wedding night, marriage forced on a young widow and the transfer of property to the son, Faqir targets the decadent culture of the Bedouin Arabs. The novel is a severe critique of the oppressive family system which, Faqir says, “is a structure with a figurehead, a patriarch who makes all the important decisions and treats everyone as infants. You see that structure multiplied everywhere in the Arab world... it is undemocratic and repressive” (Moore 2011: 3). Nawal al-Saadawi speaks on the ‘tradition’ developed by Arab women writers who faced many obstacles in order to be heard by the world, “Because of the patriarchal capitalist system which oppresses particularly women, women’s physical, intellectual and psychological abilities dwindle from childhood until the end of their lives. Only a few are saved that fate” (qtd. in Zeidan 1995: 232). Possibly, Maha is victimized and not saved, only to intensify the deformed existence of such a decaying social structure. One can say that Fadia Faqir has created not just a text but has attempted to fuse the social with the political, the women with their experiences, thereby creating a realistic discourse that lives more than a mere existence beyond temporal dimensions. Edward Said writes on ‘discourse’ thus:

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances... is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it.... Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time, such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michael Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. (94)

CONCLUSIONS

Faqir’s writings have been a constant attempt to diagnose and understand the problems of her native country such as women’s rights, human rights, democracy and reform, inherently under the influence of politics and religion. Maha, a victim of double oppression in *Pillars of Salt*, refuses to remain silent and confined within the ‘tall walls’ of her society, but protests outside her house. This is an exemplary act of a possible transformation and solution even in the present era which is aided by advancement in scientific and secular knowledge. With her progressive ideas and beliefs, Faqir is sure to realize the provocation of Leila Ahmed (1989) that, “even if Islamic republics were to build cultural walls and outlaw the political idioms of human rights that originated in the West, resourceful women and men living in such societies would still have the intellectual means to contest...the injustices against women that governments are imposing in the name of Islam” (150-151).

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